What Do Families Need?

Cathann Kress, Ph.D.
Program Lead, Partnerships

What are our assumptions?

- Lots of needs across multiple areas
- DoD should respond across all areas
- All needs are equal priority

Shirky Principle: Institutions will try to preserve the problem to which they are the solution.

Gap Analysis

- Current Situation: What is the current state?
  - What are our organizational goals for response?
  - What are our internal and external constraints?

"If you have the same problem for a long time, maybe it's not a problem. Maybe it is a fact." – Yitzhak Rabin

Desired or Necessary Situation

- We must identify desired or necessary conditions for organizational and personal success.
- It is important to identify critical tasks necessary, not just observe current practices.
- We also must distinguish actual needs from perceived needs or wants.

What are we looking for?

- *Problems or deficits.*
- *Impending change.*
- *Opportunities.*
- *Strengths.* How can we take advantage of our organizational strengths, as opposed to reacting to our weaknesses?
- *New directions.*
- *Mandates* - Are there internal or external forces dictating action to which we must comply?

How do we decide what's important?

- *Cost-effectiveness:* How does the cost of the problem compare to the cost of implementing a solution?
- *Legal mandates:* Are there laws requiring a solution?
- *Executive pressure:* Do senior leaders expect a solution?
- *Population:* Are many people or key people involved?
- *Customers:* What influence is generated by customer expectations?

Outcomes of a Needs Assessment

- Clear description of the problem, supported by data.
- Appropriate solution recommendation.

- Pinpoint the problem.
- Confirm the causes.
- Recommend solutions.

Sources of Information

Senior leaders - Administration

Employees - Helping Professionals

Content Experts - Researchers, etc.

Constituents – Families and Service members

Sources of Information

reports
surveys
interviews
journals
discussions
assessments
observations
questionnaires

Needs Assessment

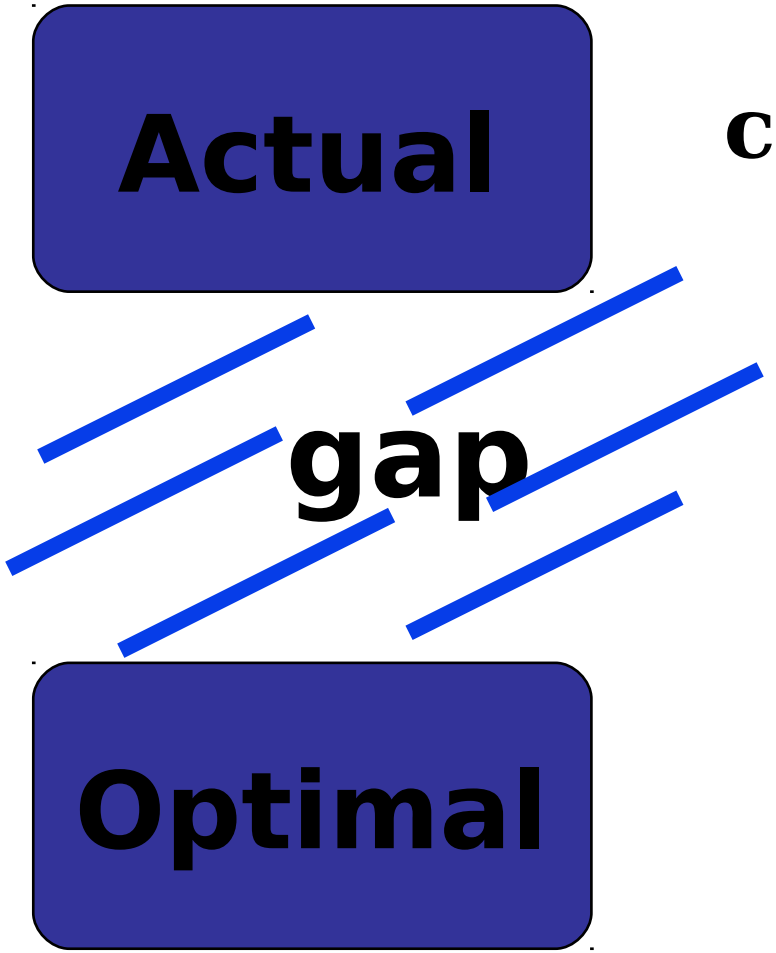
Actual

current situation (what is)

Optimal

desired situation (what should be)

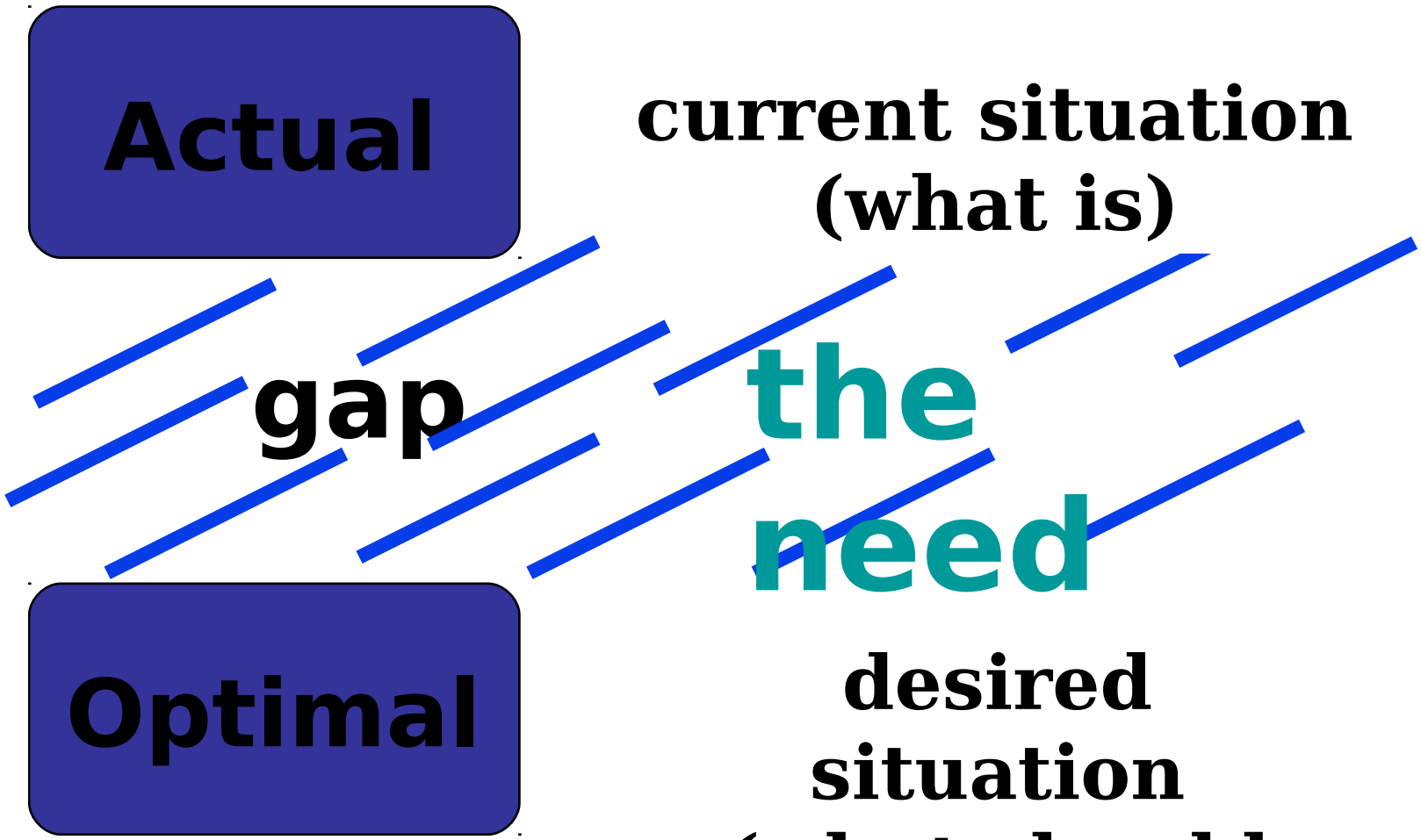
Needs Assessment



current situation (what is)

desired situation (what should be)

Needs Assessment



Needs Assessment

Actual

current situation (what is)

gap

the

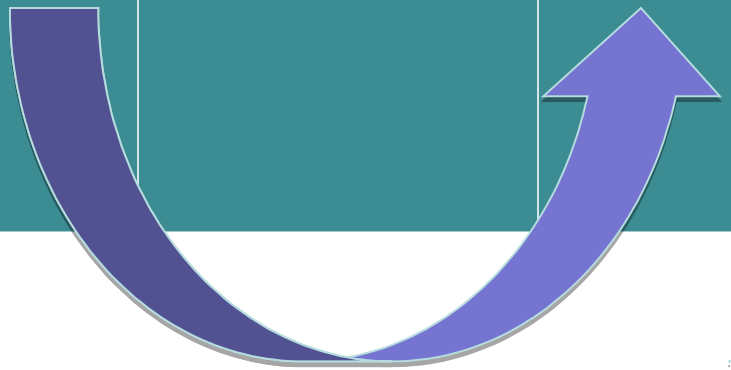
Appropriate DoD Response

Optimal

desired situation (what should be)

Defining the Problem

Problem	Cause	Solution	Goal



Strategic Planning Efforts

- Guard & Reserve Task Force (July, 2009)
- DoD Joint Family Readiness Conference (September, 2009)
- National Leadership Summit on Military Families (November, 2009)
- Military Family Readiness Council (October, 2009; December, 2009)
- Listening Sessions (fall 2009-spring 2010)
- DoD Military Family Readiness Council

Military Family Needs Assessment (MFNA)

- Conducted by Dr. Angela Huebner, VA-Tech in 2010
- Focused on family members and their experience in seeking and receiving support services
- Conducted through focus groups and online surveys
- Participants represented all Military Services and components

MFNA Themes

- Accessing Resources
  - Willingness to access on recommendation of trusted acquaintance
- Barriers
  - Awareness
  - Accessibility
  - Acceptability
- National Guard/Reserve
  - Unique Culture
  - Difficulty accessing supports
  - Differences in funding
  - Continuity of support services

MFNA Themes (cont.)

- Child & Youth Issues
  - Programs that help military children
  - Child care
  - Recognition of extended family members and caregivers of military children
  - Educational issues
- Special populations
  - Individual Augmentees
  - Dual Military Couples
  - EFMP

MFNA

- Recommendations from the field
  - Commander/supervisor initiated contact
  - Training for commanders/supervisors
  - Top Down Messages and “Orders”

Common Themes of What Families Need

- Inventory or map all programs
  - Repository for information (Clearinghouse)
- Strategic communication plan
- Early identification and treatment
- Expand child care
- Standardization across Services and program guidelines
- Leverage Partnerships

What Do Families Need?

Cathann Kress, Ph.D.
Program Lead, Partnerships